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ABSTRACT

To date there has been little study of the responsiveness of narcotics use to changes in the labor market, either in the aggregate or in the motivations of individual users. It is the authors' hypothesis that narcotics use is one of several interrelated social responses to labor market failure. What exactly has constituted this "failure" has varied from episode to episode in the growth of widespread narcotics use in American society. The authors develop the argument that the labor market primes the flow of working-class adolescents into a hypothetical hustler pool. This typically happens when, in conditions of high unemployment and absolute reductions in or deflation of the value of welfare payments, the only remaining income-earning alternative is in the criminal labor market, otherwise known as the hustle. Once society realizes that not only is the socioeconomic pattern of narcotics use the same as it was a century ago, but that the problem of widespread addiction is a recurrent and cyclical one, it will be forced to examine the social constants which have operated in each case or episode in the cycle. This report is intended as a first statement of what these constants are and how they work. (Author)

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# DRUG USE IN THE LABOR MARKET AND CLASS CONFLICT

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John Helmer
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may 1974

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# INTRODUCTION

To date there has been little study of the responsiveness of narcotics use[1] to changes in the labor market, either in the aggregate or in the motivations of individual users. Blum's (1972) comprehensive inventory of theory and evidence in the drug field does not mention labor market or income factors at all.

Yet a number of studies of the economics of the heroin trade (Preble and Casey 1969; Moore 1970; Hughes et al. 1971; O'Connor et al. 1971; Wald et al. 1972; Wheat 1972; Lasswell and McKenna 1972; Brown and Silverman 1973) lead to the prediction that both the incidence and numerical recruitment to the trade and the copping community will be highly responsive (up as well as down) to changes in such indicators of labor market conditions as wage and unemployment rates. This has been tested for the relationship between juvenile delinquency in the aggregate, unemployment and income, when it was found that in urban areas with a (statistically) high tendency toward crime, a 10% rise in incomes would be likely to result in a 20% decline in delinquency (Fleisher 1966). More recent qualitative studies of narcotic users further confirm the importance of this economic relationship at the level of individual motivation (Cutler 1967; Goldenberg 1972; Schick et al. 1972).

It is our hypothesis that narcotics use is one of several interrelated social responses to labor market failure. What exactly has constituted this "failure" has varied from episode to episode in the growth of widespread narcotics use in American society, but the major structural features common to all can be demonstrated in the brief analysis to follow.

It is our general argument that the labor market primes the flow of working-class adolescents into a hypothetical hustler pool. This is typically the situation when, in conditions of high unemployment and absolute reductions in

[1] Some simplification of terminology: narcotic drugs in this paper will refer to cocaine and the major opiates, their derivatives (codeine for example) and symthetics (methadone, dilaudid). Marijauna, which for the greater part of the period covered has been regarded as a narcotic by the State and legislated against in the same way, will be identified separately.

or deflation of the value of welfare payments, the only remaining income-earning alternative is in the criminal labor market, otherwise known as the hustle. The process of recruitment to particular forms of crime, including narcotics use and trade, will be governed by two sets of intervening variables: the first is the structure of criminal enterprise operating in particular areas; for example, the openness and mobility of its upper and lower echelons, its credit mechanisms, the degree of its capitalization (pornography is high, street prostitution and pimping is low; numbers high, gang crime low), etc. The second variable is the focus of, and risk associated with, the system of law enforcement.

Criminal labor recruitment may occur in the 16-21-year-old age group as a result of a process of drift (Matza 1964), differential association and socialization (Sutherland 1947), differential access and skill (Cloward and Ohlin 1960), a deviance labelling cycle (Schur 1961), or behavioral contagion (Wilson et al. 1972). These are, of course, the classic theories of deviance in this case, and they are all quite compatible with the structural theory to be developed here. Unless joined to such a theory, however, they are under specific and lack the predictive and quantifiable power that a fully developed structural theory can be expected to have. Such theories tend to be both too general and too *ad hoc* at the same time. They are presented, for example, as accounts of ways in which youths became involved in gang crime in the late 1950s, or in heroin use in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They do not account for the transition or switch unless, as in one case (Cloward and Ohlin 1960; cf. Chein et al. 1964), there is also a shift of analytical level on to the psychological plane and further *ad hoc* theorizing; for example, deviants who use heroin are double or triple failures in relation to both conventional norms of achievement (school) and conventional deviant norms of achievement (the gang). In a separate paper we suggest that there are few general hypotheses along psychological or personality lines which are acceptable (see Helmer 1974).

In the meantime, let us see what characteristics or variables are necessary, if not sufficient, to identify those who have used narcotics in America during the past century.

# 1 CHINESE AND OPIUM 1875-1880

Sociologists who have examined the early involvement of the Chinese in narcotics use in America have regarded the phenomenon as a widely diffused cultural norm brought from China (Ball and Lau 1966; Lyman 1972). This is wrong or misleading in several respects.

First of all, opium use in China in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was socially stratified in such a manner that, even though opium was in use by members of all social classes up to the Emperor's court, it was concentrated in the urban labor and poor peasant elements of the working class (Philippine Commission 1906). With the introduction of morphine in the 1890s (often as a substitute for opium), this class differentiation grew sharper and the association between drugs, criminality and the working class, which is conventional in American sociology, was clearly to be seen in studies of the Chinese problem (Ching-Yueh Yen 1934).

Since the first generation of Chinese immigrants to America were typically not recruited from this class, but were instead from the better-off independent peasantry or the urban petty bourgeoisie, they neither used opium in China nor brought the habit or demand for the drug with them between 1850 and 1870. These Chinese generally paid for their sea passages and brought personal capital with them to invest--in small mining claims, trading and commercial ventures. In 1852, the total amount invested by Chinese in Californian commerce alone was estimated at $2 million (Chin 1963:24).

Not even recurrent incidents of anti-Chinese rioting and virulent propaganda against them on the California gold fields during the 1850s and early 1860s produced a claim that opium was in use among them (Helmer 1974). Since this was a common feature of the anti-Chinese campaign of the late 1870s, early 1880s, it is important to note the omission. And even at a later time, in the

Mississippi Delta where Chinese immigrants had been invited in by the planters, and where the newcomers were typically of artisan rather than laboring origins, there was no mention of the drug (Loewen 1971).

However, the aggregate inflow of this class of Chinese more or less dried up by the middle of the 1860s, coinciding with the rise and then decline of surface gold-mining in the West. Since successful mining required deeper excavation, more water, blasting and sluicing equipment, the necessary technology gave large capital an important advantage, and small operators like the legions of white forty-niners, together with the Chinese, were edged out of business. In order to survive, the old generation of independent miners either had to become wage laborers or leave, and many of the Chinese preferred the latter. Between 1862 and 1863, California's gold production fell by more than half, and for the next four years more Chinese left the country than entered it.

From 1867 a new class of Chinese immigrants arrived. They were either landless peasants or laborers; they had no assets; they had borrowed to finance their passage and were ready for any job that would help pay off this debt. For nearly ten years they were contracted in large gangs for railroad construction, large-company mining or farming, or they worked in the infant manufacturing industries of San Francisco (boots and shoes, bricks, cigars, textiles and clothing).

Anti-Chinese agitation was relatively rare during the 1870s, at least for as long as labor scarcity and high wages held out for white workers—and these conditions depended upon a high rate of railroad construction. If the new Chinese smoked opium (according to Kane [1882], Chinese-patronized dens were operating in California in 1868), then there is no public record of concern about it; in fact, poor contractors themselves offered an allowance of half a pound of opium per month as a bonus above wages to attract Chinese laborers (Barth 1964:197).

As Table 1 indicates, there was a sharp fall in railroad construction in 1873, but this revived for a short time. After 1876, the decline paralleled a sharp depression in the urban industrial sector, with the result that labor scarcity turned to surplus, and wages slumped. Especially hard hit was San Francisco, the center of the region's industrial growth. To an important degree this had been built on Chinese labor whose availability, passivity and low price made them essential to local entrepreneurs and the market for common manufactures. In terms of concentration and visibility, the Chinese dominated the boot and shoe, cigar and brick manufacturing industries, and they were also visible and economically important in agriculture and fishing.

When the depression struck, this high visibility again precipitated anti-Chinese agitation just as the decline in surface gold mining had done earlier. Although the principal cause of these economic conditions was the competition of the sweat-shops of the Eastern seaboard states which had gotten freer access to the

TABLE 1

STATISTICAL PROFILE OF CALIFORNIA, 1870-80

| Year | Railroad Construction California (Miles) | Price Index of Gold in California | Value of Product Per Worker-Shoe Manufacturing in San Francisco ($) | Value of Product Per Worker-Clothing Manufacturing in San Francisco ($) | Net Chinese Immigration United States Total | Imports of Smoking Opium United States Total (Lbs.) |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1870 | 105.7 | n.a | 1710 | 2764 | 6637 | 12603 |
| 1871 | 122.5 | n.a | 1380 | 1923 | 2278 | 37824 |
| 1872 | 218.4 | n.a | 1500 | 2072 | 4886 | 49375 |
| 1873 | 51.8 | n.a | 1900 | 2225 | 10270 | 53059 |
| 1874 | 101.9 | 111.4 | 1367 | 1756 | 8375 | 55344 |
| 1875 | 152.2 | 114.9 | 1160 | 1569 | 11716 | 62775 |
| 1876 | 399.0 | 111.5 | 1000 | 571 | 14256 | 53189 |
| 1877 | 157.6 | 104.8 | 666 | 750 | 2433 | 47428 |
| 1878 | 159.5 | 104.8 | 614 | 750 | 806 | 54805 |
| 1879 | n.a | 100.0 | 620 | 750 | 384 | 60648 |
| 1880 | n.a | 100.0 | 658 | 759 | −1694 | 77196 |

*Source:* Chin (1963:48, 94, 105, 142). Opium import figures, Wright (1910:82, 83).

West upon completion of the railroads, both small manufacturers and the white urban labor force aligned themselves together and identified Chinese competition as the cause of their problems. Farmer interests, along with the mining and railroad companies, stood to benefit most from a Chinese labor surplus, and they opposed the immigration cut-off and repatriation measures proposed by the urban groups. Craft unionists dominated the exclusion campaign and made it part of the platform of the Democrats.

The effect was that exclusion of the Chinese became the rallying cry of (white) working class mobilization in the city (Saxton 1971; Hill 1973). Tactically, this was the "single issue wherein skilled and unskilled workers, small businessmen, some (small, family) farmers and the Democratic politicians could form a common front" (Chin 1963:137). The use of opium was just one of the many issues which fueled the conflict. It was part of the hostile stereotype of the Chinese which appeared in popular circulation to justify and legitimize the white working-class ideology of the time.

There can be little doubt that this latent function was the important one. Not until the depression struck was any official notice taken of the opium dens, and even then it was never suggested that the use of the drug was harmful *per se*. It was its character as a Chinese habit, not as a narcotic, which warranted the

earliest legislation against opium in the country, enacted by the San Francisco municipal authority in 1875.

With very rough estimates it is possible to show how the aggregate number of Chinese users and the prevalence rate changed between 1870 and 1890. The figures in Table 2 are based on four simplifying assumptions: (1) minimal smuggling of the drug; (2) all smoking opium imported in that form and not prepared in the U.S. from gum opium base; (3) all opium smokers Chinese; and (4) all Chinese smokers heavy ones. Variation in any of these or in combination would radically alter the aggregate and rate estimates, and there is no telling whether such variation was equal and constant at each time period. Both the 1880 and 1890 estimates do come close, however, to the 10% heavy smoking rate figured from different sources by Wright (1910:43).

There is thus the suggestion from the data of a significant increase in opium smoking by the Chinese between 1870 and 1880, although most of the increase probably occurred between 1875 and 1880, that is, *after* the anti-opium ordinance went into effect and during the period when Chinese population growth virtually stopped. Between 1879 and 1880 there was a net outflow of Chinese, and opium imports jumped an extraordinary 27%; between 1880 and 1884 the annual average imports (smoking opium) were running at two and a half times the 1871-1879 level (Wright 1910:82-83).

The explanation of Chinese drug use has typically been oriented to demand factors. That the demand existed in the mid-1870s and increased thereafter cannot be doubted, but the data suggest that an increase on the supply side preceded the rise in demand for consumption, that it was unrelated to

TABLE 2

RATE OF OPIUM USE AMONG CHINESE IN THE UNITED, STATES, 1870-90

| | Year | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 1870 | 1880 | 1890 |
| Total Chinese pop. in U.S. | 63199 | 105465 | 106488 |
| Annual average imports smoking opium, for previous five years. (Lbs.) | 21666 | 58653 | 64465 |
| Number Opium Smokers @ 6 lb.ea. p.a. | 3611 | 9776 | 10744 |
| Prevalence rate (%) | 5.7 | 9.3 | 10.1 |

*Source:* U. S. Census figures; Wright (1910).

population changes, and that the whole process may be explained differently. This has been attempted in another source (Helmer 1974). Briefly what was involved was a complex system of speculation in the international opium trade and the development of opium-trading organizations (*tongs*) within the highly stratified and oligopolistic structure of the Chinese community in San Francisco. During the depression and wage slump, opium was both an alternative source of income and a money token itself within Chinatown.

This is necessarily beside the point, however, for these developments followed the start of the exclusion compaign and the initial legislation against the drug. The latter were primarily responses to labor market failure, and the extent to which the secondary labor market, dominated by Chinese, offered no "work relief" to the unemployed or insecure white working class. The ideological role of the anti-opium campaign was to get rid of the Chinese, and it had a practical consequence: it provided a legal basis for unrestrained, and in the circumstances quite arbitrary, police raids and searches of Chinese premises in San Francisco. Ostensibly to identify opium dens, these raids served the same purpose that the vigilantes of the mine fields had performed against Chinese encampments in the mid-1850s.

# 2 BLACKS, COCAINE AND OPIUM 1905-1920

Hamilton Wright, a doctor and State Department official who represented the United States at the International Opium Commission in Shanghai in 1909, and who was probably more influential than anyone else in the government on drug policy, reported the following in 1910: "The use of cocaine by the negroes of the South is one of the most elusive and troublesome questions which confront the enforcement of the law in most of the Southern states" (1910:49). He went on that the drug "is often the direct incentive to the crime of rape by the negroes of the South and other sections of the country" (1910:50).

Was there any evidence for this?

Green, who examined admissions to the Georgia State Sanitarium from 1909 to 1914 (a total of 2,119 blacks) found only three cases of narcotic addiction among black patients in contrast to 142 "drug psychoses" among whites. Of the three, cocaine was used by itself once, and once in combination with morphine and alcohol. The third case involved the opiate laudanum (Green 1914:701). Green suggested that the very low cash income of blacks precluded their use of drugs, but predicted a higher prevalence rate in the North where "the negro is more prosperous" (1914:702).

Other data confirm low incidence and prevalence rates for the opiates among Southern blacks. Roberts (1885) reported an almost insignificant case rate in the Carolinas. In 1913, in Jacksonville, Florida, a survey of prescription records turned up 28.8% black opiate users, but since over half of the city's total population was black, the survey confirmed that "the white race is more prone to use opium than the negro" (Terry and Pellens 1928:25). Two years later in Tennessee, Brown found only 10% blacks among registered opiate users—significantly less than their proportion in the state overall (Brown 1915).

Although blacks in the Northern cities were hardly prosperous, and in the peak periods of urban unemployment (1908, 1914 and 1919-21) they were relatively worse off, they did enjoy higher wage rates than the Southerners. Was this associated with higher rates of narcotic use?

Two studies of Washington's institutionalized population—one of 175 workhouse inmates and another of patients treated in the city's hospitals between 1900 and 1908—indicate that the number of cocaine users in that period was very small compared with the size of the alcoholic or even the opium addict population, and no particular concentration of blacks was observed (President's Homes Commission 1909:252-254).

Of course, there may be a large error of estimation in reliance on institutional figures, if we suppose that blacks would be less likely than whites to seek or receive treatment for drug addiction at sanitaria or hospitals. However, it does appear that the picture provided by institutional counts matches that given by close and involved observers such as the police.

Bloedorn, for example, provided evidence from admissions statistics of Bellevue Hospital that coacine use in New York peaked in 1907 and dropped quite sharply from 1908 to 1909, remaining at a low level through the war (Bloedorn 1917). An almost identical pattern was reported by the chief of Washington's police, who described the cocaine problem as reaching "alarming proportions" around 1906-07, but substantially diminishing after the passage of the Pure Food and Drugs Act in 1906: "My information" he reported, "is that the sale of cocaine is about one-tenth of what it was before the present law went into effect" (President's Homes Commission 1909:255).

The implication to be drawn from the Homes Commission papers was that few officials regarded the use of cocaine as either an especially black problem, or, after 1909, as serious as the problem of heroin use, which began to develop at that time. Why then did Wright, who had read these same reports, insist on declaring that "the misuse of cocaine is . . . the most threatening of the drug habits that has ever appeared in this country" (1910:50) and that the principal carriers of the threat were black?

Fragmentary evidence indicates that blacks tended to use patent medicines more than whites in general. This reflected high relative mortality rates for influenza and bronchial infections (e.g., catarrh) (President's Homes Commission 1909:210; Historical Statistics of the U.S. 1960:26, 33). There is also an indication that even where mortality rates were very similar, as between blacks and working-class whites in the Northern cities, blacks continued to spend a greater proportion of their income on medicine and health care (DuBois 1909; Weber 1909; Kennedy et al. 1914; Helmer 1974).

This is relevant insofar as the common medicines for the treatment of pulmonary bronchial disorders were at this time compounded of opiate and cocaine mixtures (Young 1961). This suggests that blacks may have consumed

relatively more narcotics on a per capita basis, at least in the form of patent medicine. This does not establish the fact of wider usage than that. Kolb and Dumez (1924) attempted to explain the higher rates of narcotic addiction in the Southern states (pre-war period) as a consequence of medically-induced exposure to drugs, but since we have already shown that blacks were in fact *under-represented* amont drug users in the region, this particular explanation is unsatisfactory.

It is possible that another factor may have been at work stimulating cocaine use (and other narcotics) in the South–Prohibition. Between 1880 and 1910 this had spread from state to state, most rapidly and extensively in the South, and there were press reports at the time claiming that one of its effects had been to increase the substitution of drugs for liquor. On the other hand, black consumption of alcohol was far less than that of whites (Helmer 1974) so that Prohibition was less meaningful to them, and even at the price Wright quotes for cocaine in 1910–25c a grain–few blacks working as sharecroppers or as laborers could have afforded it regularly and still have eaten and paid the rent.

The plain fact is that Wright, the chief authority for the claim of a black cocaine problem and later the virtual author of the Harrison Bill legislation to ban it, was reporting unsubstantiated gossip and quite dishonestly misrepresented the evidence before him. As evidence already quoted revealed, cocaine use reached a peak in 1907 and went sharply down thereafter. The import figures bear this out: in 1907 1.5 million pounds of coca leaves entered the country; the next year this was cut by more than half (Wright 1910:33).

But if official concern about the black cocaine problem was based on a myth, we find that when blacks in fact began using drugs on a wider scale, almost no notice was taken of it. Figure 1 illustrates the racial composition of the narcotic addict population in various cities and areas up to 1940, as provided by available surveys.

Whites clearly predominated in every case, Northern and Southern alike, and the Jacksonville group amounted to the largest proportion of black addicts for nearly 30 years. What the chart does not indicate are the major shifts in the black population from South to North, and the consequent change in the relative size of the black and white populations from place to place. Since these will have affected the racial proportions of the addict group also, what we need to express is the *relative likelihood* of blacks becoming heavy narcotics users compared with whites over the same period.

A simple way to express this is to take the ratio of black to white users for each area and divide it by the ratio of the black to white total population for the same place. At unity we can say that blacks were as likely to use narcotics as whites in that locality; for fractions less than one, the smaller the score, the more under-represented blacks were among the users, and above unity, the larger

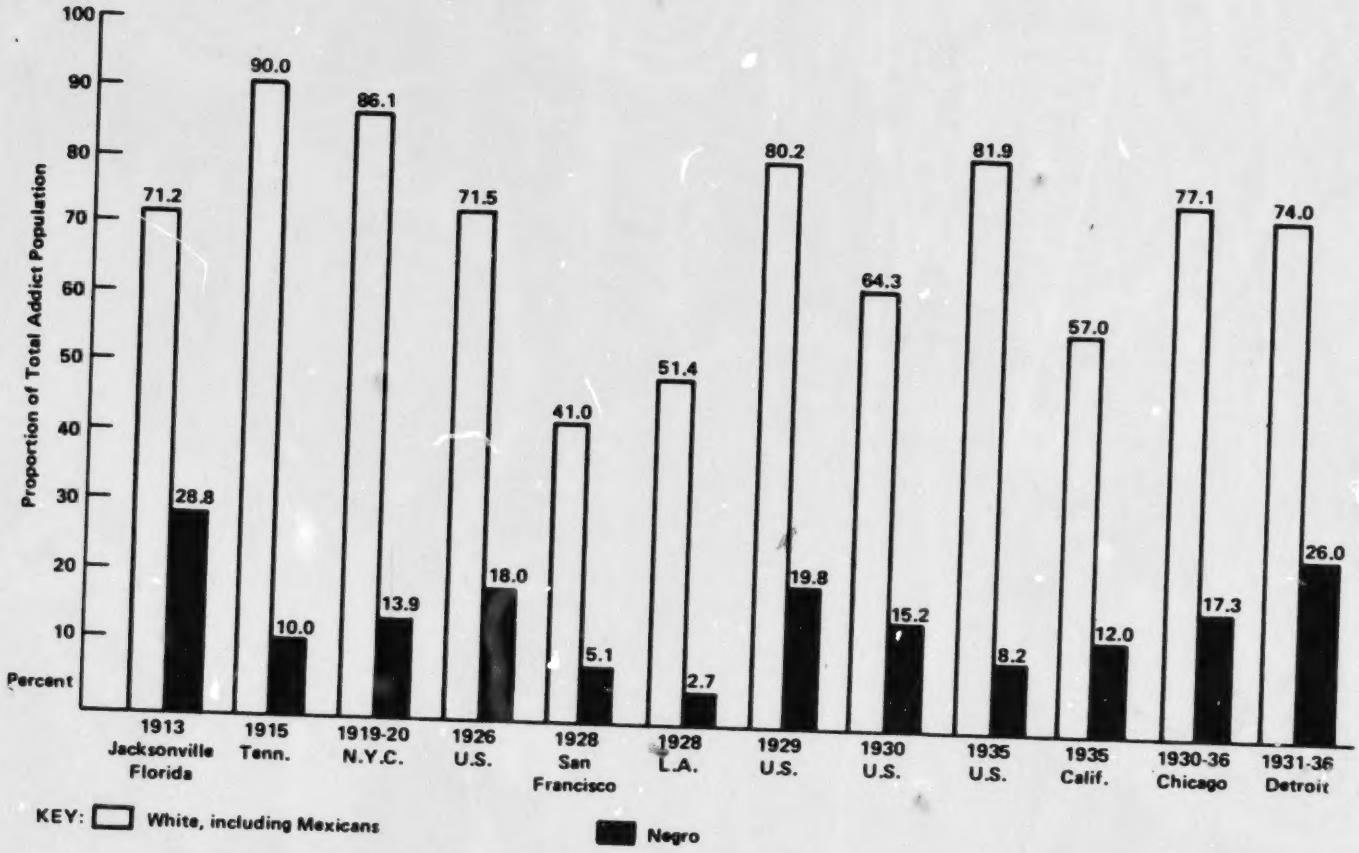


Figure 1. Percentages of White and Black Narcotics Users, Various Geographical Areas, Estimated by Various Methods, 1910-40.

the score, the more over-represented and hence more likely they were to become users as compared with whites.

Right at the end of the period we are considering, the evidence of the New York City Narcotic Clinic is especially interesting because it is the first reported instance of an over-representation of black narcotics users, and hence of a higher prevalence rate for them as compared with whites. Yet the facts were almost totally ignored. The City Health Commissioner, reporting on the drug problem in 1920, failed to mention the race of the clinic's patients; what struck him most was that the majority of them were under twenty-five years of age. He reported that over two-thirds were straight heroin users (Copeland 1920); only 10% admitted to mixing cocaine with heroin or morphine; and an insignificant number claimed to prefer the use of cocaine itself. The clinic experienced almost no demand for it. In other words, the drug which ten years before publicists and legislators had blamed on the blacks was relatively uncommon in 1920, whereas the heroin habit, which young New York blacks were developing at a faster rate than whites, was all but invisible.

During the war and immediately afterward, the newspapers were curiously silent on the race of narcotics users—curious because stories of black sexual assaults on whites were legion, and because just a few years before cocaine had been widely thought to be involved in this kind of violence. In 1919 racial tension reached a high point. Lynch mobs murdered 78 blacks in that year, many of them accused of rape, and race riots broke out in several cities including Washington and Chicago, where again claims of sexual assault were involved. Neither cocaine nor other drugs were mentioned in the press as a contributing cause. Instead, the blame was laid on socialist and radical agitators, members of International Workers of the World, the Bolsheviks, even on Harvard graduates (Helmer 1974).

We learn something important about the ideology of narcotics from this. For just as it was pure invention that Bolshevik agitators had led blacks to riot during 1919, so it was an invention of the same kind that at the beginning of the decade cocaine had been "a potent incentive in driving humbler negroes all over the country to abnormal crimes" (Wright 1910:51). Both functioned as myths to explain why it would happen that otherwise docile, passive (humble was Wright's term for inferior) black people would riot against the impoverished conditions in which they were confined.

In the period just considered, this condition, along with the condition of the entire working class, experienced several fluctuations, each of them paralleled by evidence or claims of a new drug problem. Unemployment, for example, rose sharply between 1907 and 1908 (the peak of the cocaine problem), between 1913 and 1914 (the onset of a heroin problem), and again between 1919 and 1921.

The war itself had stimulated the reconstruction of the Northern labor force

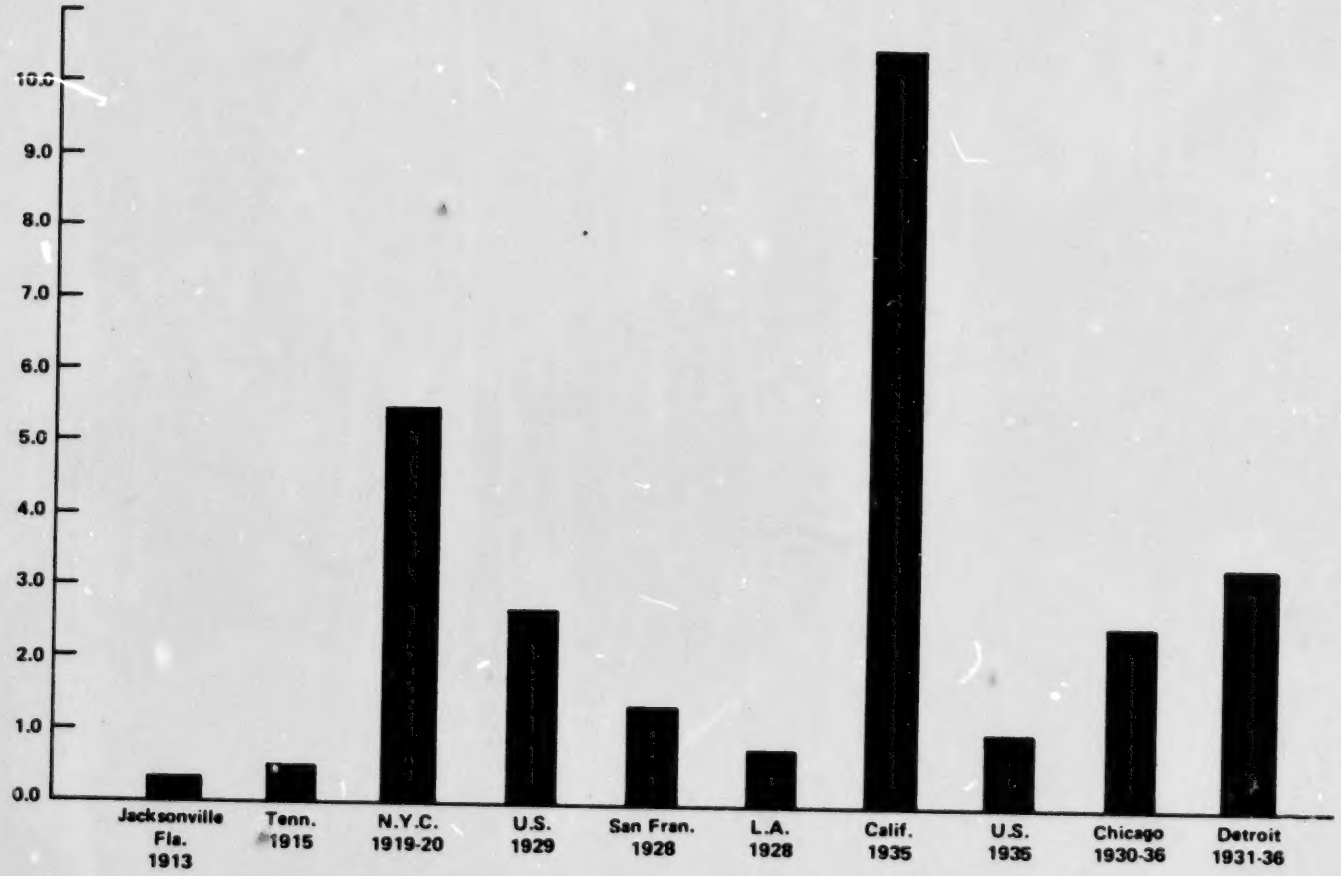


Figure 2. Index of Racial Susceptibility to Narcotics Use Among Blacks and Whites, 1910-40.

by inducing the large-scale emigration of blacks out of the rural South to man in the labor-scarce urban economy. As this economy changed with the demobilization from a condition of labor scarcity to labor surplus, the tension between working-class whites and blacks rose as the necessity for competition for jobs and declining wages was forced upon them (Tuttle 1970). Rape, crime, drug addiction, and bolshevism were elements of the hostile stereotype to emerge in this conflict, and their relation to the real state of things was immaterial. The assault against white women, like the bolshevik's attack against Americanism, or the image of the cocaine fiend, were all constituents of a common ideology designed to justify and legitimize the repression with which black social and economic claims were met. They were not additive, however: either cocaine led blacks to run amuck or else bolshevism did, but never both. It took another thirty years before those two could be put together.

# 3 WHITE WORKING-CLASS OPIATE USE 1910-1920

It has been suggested that until the Harrison Act (1914) and other legislation limited the medical supply of narcotics and made it virtually illegal to buy, sell or consume the drugs, addicts were recruited from all social classes, not particularly from the working class (Terry and Pellens 1928; Duster 1970; DeLong 1972).

This is based on unsystematic observations made by early surveyors, and upon the widespread availability of narcotics in the form of patent medicine.

The only evidence we have been able to locate was referred to in the preceding section and deals exclusively with Washington, D.C. (Weber 1909). This suggests that the use of patent medicines was inversely related to family income. The higher the income, the smaller the proportion of income spent on such medicine; the lower the income, the higher this proportion (Table 3).

This is only a suggestive finding, for it indicates nothing about the size of aggregate or per capita consumption of the medicines by income group or class; a small proportion of a large income spent on patent medicine may still have purchased more medicine than a larger proportion of a small income.

The data included in Table 3 on family expenditures for sickness and death are also far from conclusive, but they reflect the higher rates of fertility and then mortality in the lowest income group, as compared with the others. It may be hypothesized that the largest proportion of these expenditures was made on death (funeral, etc.) in this group, and on doctors to prevent death in the highest income group. Patent medicines were a *substitute* for the doctor in the lowest income group, and narcotics obtained by doctor's prescription would commonly have been consumed only by those income groups able to afford the doctor's fee.

TABLE 3

FAMILY BUDGET EXPENDITURES AS A PROPORTION OF TOTAL INCOME BY INCOME GROUP, 1908

| Income | Number Families in Class | Average Size of Families | Gross Income Percent | Rent | Food | Fuel & Light | Clothing | Insurance | Sickness & Death |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Class A, $500 or under | 476 | 3.11 | 100.00 | 21.37 | 43.68 | 6.74 | 8.99 | 2.80 | 2.12 |
| Class B, $500 to $600 | 159 | 3.94 | 100.00 | 17.56 | 43.59 | 5.41 | 9.90 | 3.04 | .81 |
| Class C, $600 to $700 | 153 | 4.18 | 100.00 | 17.17 | 41.40 | 4.88 | 10.53 | 2.67 | 1.00 |
| Class D, $700 to $800 | 153 | 4.40 | 100.00 | 15.64 | 40.21 | 4.89 | 11.14 | 2.27 | 1.40 |
| Class E, $800 to $900 | 89 | 4.79 | 100.00 | 13.31 | 41.92 | 4.33 | 11.59 | 2.77 | 1.30 |
| Class F, $900 to $1000 | 93 | 4.77 | 100.00 | 13.60 | 38.43 | 4.05 | 11.70 | 2.90 | 1.10 |
| Class G, $1000 to $1500 | 82 | 5.48 | 100.00 | 10.96 | 33.38 | 3.34 | 11.55 | 2.39 | 1.34 |
| Class H, $1500 and upward | 12 | 4.50 | 100.00 | 5.37 | 21.03 | 2.77 | 10.23 | 1.90 | 3.22 |

| Income | Number Families in Class | Average Size of Families | Patent Medicines | Liquor | Tobacco | Amusements | Miscellaneous or Other | Total | Surplus |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Class A, $500 or under | 476 | 3.11 | 0.29 | 1.97 | 1.21 | 1.47 | 7.76 | 98.39 | 3.18 |
| Class B, $500 to $600 | 159 | 3.94 | .16 | 2.33 | 1.45 | 2.76 | 10.78 | 97.73 | 2.42 |
| Class C, $600 to $700 | 153 | 4.18 | .18 | 3.27 | 1.82 | 2.68 | 11.20 | 96.82 | 3.18 |
| Class D, $700 to $800 | 153 | 4.40 | .18 | 2.32 | 1.71 | 3.52 | 10.78 | 94.10 | 5.90 |
| Class E, $800 to $900 | 89 | 4.79 | .13 | 1.39 | 1.52 | 3.43 | 12.04 | 93.76 | 6.28 |
| Class F, $900 to $1000 | 93 | 4.77 | .11 | 1.89 | 1.76 | 3.95 | 11.89 | 91.42 | 8.58 |
| Class G, $1000 to $1500 | 82 | 5.48 | .23 | 1.41 | 1.19 | 3.97 | 14.01 | 86.29 | 13.72 |
| Class H, $1500 and upward | 12 | 4.50 | .14 | .90 | 1.02 | 4.00 | 14.08 | 64.58 | 35.42 |

*Source:* Weber (1909:288).

It stands to reason that the class of people with the longest working hours, the most physically demanding occupations, the least income for adequate clothing, housing and heat during winter, and the least access to professional medical treatment, would experience the highest incidence of respiratory diseases, and would consume in the aggregate relatively more of the opiate or cocaine-based patent medicines.

As indicated previously, it does not necessarily follow that consumption of these medicines and so-called opiate addiction were positively associated, although that was the typical assumption upon which has been based much of the claim for middle-class addiction prior to the Harrison Act.

The only other evidence regarding the class of drug users around the time of the Harrison Act confirms that they were modally of working-class origins, as measured by occupation or education (less than high school). There was, for example, a noticeable increase in the number of adolescent drug users between 1910 and 1915. The evidence for this is scattered through individual court, hospital and prison records; for instance, a judge of the Court of Special Sessions, New York, reported that in 1916, 18.9% of drug cases presented were under 21 years of age, and that between 1916 and 1921 this was the peak for that age group (Helmer 1974). Bloedorn found that the largest proportion of drug cases admitted to Bellevue Hospital between 1908 and 1916 were between the ages of 21 and 23, and most had begun drug use as teenagers (1917:315-316).

Heroin users in particular, according to the same author, tended to be younger than morphine, opium or cocaine users, and their proportion of the hospital's drug-addiction intake rose steadily after 1913. Rosenblutt, who was Superintendent of a New York State reformatory in 1914 (Bender 1963:183) and Lichtenstein, who was a medical officer attached to the Tombs, New York City's prison (Lichtenstein 1914:962), both identified the immediate pre-war period as one of a heroin epidemic, and other sources confirm its working-class nature. Bloedorn wrote that "there can be no doubt that overcrowding, congestion, unsanitary surroundings, and a lack of the facilities for healthful recreation are predisposing factors in drug addiction" (1917:309). Lichtenstein, with a somewhat different theory, identified the same antecedent class variable: "the greater number (of addicts) are of the gangster type and consequently are mental and moral degenerates" (1914:964). Parallel studies of heroin use among enlisted men in the Navy (R.S. 1916) and Army (King 1916) provide partial background data which reinforce the central class tendency.

Few of the data sources provide information on the race or ethnicity of these drug users. There is not much doubt about identifying the military users as white, but the adolescent population in New York is more difficult to characterize. It was almost certainly not Chinese, and in New York, according to Lichtenstein, the three most common groups by ethnic origin (heroin users only)

were American, Italian and "Hebrew American" (Jews born in the U.S. to immigrant parents) (Lichtenstein 1914:964). Indeed, among the 159 arrestees whose names were reported by the *New York Times* between 1913 and 1915 (the first 24 months after enactment of New York City's own anti-narcotic legislation), Jews were especially prominent. They appear to have dominated the street trade in drugs in Brooklyn, where Samuel Greenberg, known as "King of Cokies," was arrested for possession of cocaine in July 1914. Italians, or combinations of Italians and Jews, ran dealing networks in lower Manhattan and in the Tenderloin areas (Helmer 1974).

In the statistics of the New York City Narcotic Clinic close to 70% of the patients between 1919 and 1920 were American-born, and Jews with East European backgrounds were a sizable proportion of both these and the foreign-born whites (Helmer 1974). The breakdown for occupations revealed that fewer than 70% of the patients in all could be classed as professionals, managers or proprietors—the majority of these in fact were actors or actresses. Of the rest, most were unskilled or semi-skilled manual workers (the two commonest occupations listed were driver and laborer), followed by skilled tradesmen, and last of all, by clerks and salesmen (10%) (Helmer 1974).

No doubt doctors, who were commonly thought to be prone to morphine addiction, may have been able to conceal their habit and secure their source of supply, but in the aggregate it is likely that neither they nor the middle-class housewife, who, many researchers still believe, was the typical pre-war addict (Duster 1970:12), amounted to much in comparison with the large bodies of "respectable" and "criminal" working-class drug users.

Once this is established, it will be evident that the socioeconomic pattern of narcotic addiction has scarcely changed since before legislation made narcotics illegal. It remains to illustrate further how that legislation has functioned in the context of simple class conflict, and to consider whether the rise of the black addict since 1940 is explicable as a unique phenomenon of race or a conventional one of class.

# 4 MEXICAN-AMERICANS AND MARIJUANA 1930-1937

It is now well established that the Federal Marijuana Tax Act, the instrument which fixed national policy to outlaw the drug, was enacted in response to political pressure from the Southwest, California and several mountain states during the early 1930s (Musto 1972; Helmer 1974). The Act passed in 1937, by which time the Federal Bureau of Narcotics had been convinced that the use of the drug was national in extent and was pernicious in its effects. Two years before, the Bureau had gone on the record to say that the problem was concentrated in the Southwest and was a relatively minor one even there.

The brief explanation for the changed policy, and for the origins of the pressure to change it, is that marijuana was commonly used by Mexican immigrants to the U.S. people who worked mostly as rural or other unskilled laborers. The ideology of marijuana grew in the 1930s as a result of a desire to drive these Mexicans back over the border, although for reasons which had nothing to do with the nature of the drug or its psychological effects. All the same, a theory of the evils of the drug, which linked its use and supply to being Mexican, made hostility toward these people seem slightly more reasonable, and public policy to remove them that much more acceptable.

The following tables illustrate the bare bones of the story. Table 4 indicates the large numbers of Mexican immigrants entering the country during the decade of the 1920s. Ninety percent of the total Mexican population lived at this time in only four states Texas, California, Arizona and New Mexico. In 1930 in Texas they made up 11.7% of the state; in California, 6.5%. The largest concentration in California (26.4%) was in Los Angeles.

Table 5 summarizes labor market data for the farm during the decade of the 1920s. Actually, for only four of those years was there a condition of labor scarcity, and the surplus in percentage terms was almost as great in 1924 as in 1930, at the outset of the Depression. However, since the size of the labor force

TABLE 4

NUMBER OF MEXICAN IMMIGRANTS COMPARED WITH ALL EMIGRANTS, 1900-1939

| Period | Mexican | Total | Mexican as Percent of Total |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1900-1904 | 2,259 | 3,255,149 | .07 |
| 1905-1909 | 21,732 | 4,947,239 | .44 |
| 1910-1914 | 82,588 | 5,174,701 | 1.60 |
| 1915-1919 | 91,075 | 1,172,679 | 7.77 |
| 1920-1924 | 249,248 | 2,774,600 | 8.98 |
| 1925-1929 | 238,527 | 1,520,910 | 15.68 |
| 1930-1934 | 19,200 | 426,953 | 4.50 |
| 1935-1939 | 8,737 | 272,922 | 3.21 |

*Source:* Grebler et al. (1970:64).

TABLE 5

DEMAND FOR AND SUPPLY OF FARM LABOR IN CALIFORNIA, 1918-30 (AS OF APRIL 1)

| Year | Percent of Normal | | Percent of Supply to Demand |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Supply | Demand | |
| 1918 | 80 | 103 | 78 |
| 1919 | 93 | 103 | 90 |
| 1920 | 84 | 104 | 81 |
| 1921 | 99 | 93 | 106 |
| 1922 | 107 | 96 | 111 |
| 1923 | 94 | 96 | 98 |
| 1924 | 102 | 85 | 120 |
| 1925 | 103 | 88 | 117 |
| 1926 | 100 | 94 | 106 |
| 1927 | 101 | 94 | 107 |
| 1928 | 104 | 91 | 114 |
| 1929 | 102 | 91 | 112 |
| 1930 | 105 | 87 | 121 |

*Source:* U.S. Department of Agricultural figures, and Fuller (1940:19860).

in 1930 was much the larger of the two, the surplus of that year was in numerical terms one of the largest in state history.

Marijuana was almost certainly in use among the Mexicans working on the farm at this time. It was as conventional to them as alcohol consumption was to Anglos; it was one of many customs brought from the peasant culture across the border. Yet during the 1920s almost no notice was taken of it in the Anglo communities in which they worked, in spite of a widespread belief in their criminality in other respects. Surveys of Mexican involvement in crime in Texas (Handman 1931; Taylor 1931) found no evidence to support this, and sources of data for several towns in California prior to 1930 revealed very little police awareness of, or concern for, marijauna.

After 1930 the situation changed radically. There were two levels of conflict between Mexicans and the local community, corresponding to the rural conflict between Mexican farm labor and the farmers and growers and to the urban conflict, located principally in Los Angeles, where the conflict was between Mexicans and other, Anglo members of the working class.

From the mid- 920s, American Federation of Labor locals in California and the Southwest had pressed for Federal restrictions on the inflow of Mexican labor. They were joined by small-scale (typically one-family) farmers, the American Legion and a variety of nativist, patriotic organizations. They were opposed, and successfully blocked, by the large-scale farm interests, the *Los Angeles Times*, railroad and mining groups and, at the national level, the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and the major farm lobbies (Fuller 1940).

Since there was no shortage of Mexican labor after 1923, the profitability of farm crops would not have been seriously affected by the proposed immigration quotas, although the farm bloc used this as one of their arguments. What was at stake was the very high-priced and speculative structure of land ownership and investment, especially in Southern California, which was sustained by the expectation of a low labor factor price. This in turn was thought to depend upon a large pool of unemployed rural workers (Taylor 1928; Fuller 1940; Helmer 1974).

Through the decade of the 1920s, neither the rural employers nor the rural county authorities cared particularly about the social welfare or the "criminality" of the Mexican laborers. Since they were virtual nomads, moving from area to area in time with field and crop schedules, they made relatively light and intermittent demands on county resources, and in any case they were generally excluded from receiving them by a combination of physical segregation, local ordinance and brute force. According to a survey of Imperial County (California) in 1927, "the record of law observance among Mexicans . . . is distinctly favorable to them" (Taylor 1931:212).

What threatened the farm interests a great deal more than marijuana use was incipient unionism among the farm workers, for this, of course, directly attacked

the labor-capital relationship on which the economic position of the farm interests depended. Predictably, therefore, union agitation was a felony crime in California as was the so-called offense of preaching anarchism or bolshevism. These ideological catch-alls were designed to allow police to break up and arrest almost any number of Mexicans meeting together.

The union movement began to develop out of the Mexican mutual aid societies around 1928. A major strike among melon pickers occurred in Imperial Valley in that year, and was broken up by police and vigilantes. From 1930 on, however, union organization spread rapidly in the fields; between 1932 and 1934 the newly formed Cannery and Agricultural Workers' Industrial Union initiated 32 strikes. In one of the most serious of these, the San Joaquin cotton strike of 1933, three Mexicans were shot to death by police, and more than 20 wounded (Taylor and Kerr 1940).

This had its effect on attitudes toward marijuana, as the farm interests sought legal means to attack the Mexican organizations without driving the labor force away altogether. The pressure for a Federal marijuana law thus reflected the state of industrial conflict which intensified through the early Depression years but which had not existed in the 1920s. Since marijuana was almost entirely consumed by the Mexican laborers, legislation against it was intended as legislation against them.

The urban pressures for the drug law were somewhat different but had the same effect. Table 6 indicates the principal source of social strain—high unemployment among Mexicans with the onset of the Depression.

Mexicans were particularly visible in Los Angeles both in terms of their rapid population growth and their residential and occupational concentration. During the 1920s the city had grown by 115%, but the Mexicans by 226%. Together with the Japanese, they made up 9.5% of the work force in 1930, but 38% in

TABLE 6

UNEMPLOYED AS PERCENT OF GAINFUL WORKERS 14 YEARS OF AGE AND OVER OF SAME RACE AND SEX, LOS ANGELES CITY, 1930

| | Total | Male | Female |
|---|---|---|---|
| All races | 7.7 | 8.5 | 5.6 |
| Native White | 7.2 | 8.0 | 5.4 |
| Foreign-born White | 8.2 | 8.9 | 5.5 |
| Negro | 7.9 | 8.5 | 7.1 |
| Mexican | 13.1 | 14.9 | 6.2 |
| Other | 1.1 | 1.1 | 0.9 |

*Source:* Kasun (1954:32).

unskilled construction and 47% in menial service. Their average wage rates were consequently the lowest in the city (less than 50 cents an hour), their level of housing and sanitation extremely poor, and their health standard much worse than the Anglo norm or county average (Helmer 1974).

So long as the demand for labor exceeded its supply in the city, the problem of social control of the Mexican group was considered serious but not large. A report in 1925 indicated the presence of the same pattern we have observed before: high rates of pulmonary and bronchial illness, treated by patent medicine, and common use of marijuana (McCombs 1925:36-37).

Official action against drug use did not really step up until late 1929 and early 1930, at which time it was widely believed to be associated with assault and homicide (Hayes and Bowery 1933:1071). The evidence for this was typically hearsay and never quantified. In spite of widespread publicity devoted to Mexican drug use in the city, the *most common of offenses* for which Mexicans were arrested were disturbing the peace or vagrancy, and outside of Los Angeles, even among substantial Mexican communities, charges of marijuana use were negligible (Helmer 1974). Despite allegations that the drug was behind many of the city's homicides, by 1930 the homicide rate had begun to fall, and there is some evidence to indicate that blacks were significantly more overrepresented in homicide arrests than Mexicans (Helmer 1974). No one ever alleged that they used marijuana—although they probably did.

The problem of unemployment in general, and of Mexicans in particular, led to a variety of measures to help reduce the labor surplus and in effect cut the cost to the county authorities of maintaining an expanded relief program. Anti-union previsions, the vagrancy laws, the virtual suspension of *habeas corpus* and enforcement of the State Poison Act to deal with marijuana—these were the methods used. Finally, in 1931, the Los Angeles authorities discovered that shipping Mexicans across the border was a great deal cheaper than maintaining them on welfare, and so the plan, which was to result in massive repatriations across the country, was initiated.

This was more effective than the piecemeal efforts of the law enforcement agencies, but together they underscore the context in which the ideology of marijuana first developed. The situation was thus quite familiar in its general features to the opium and Chinese exclusion campaign of 50 years before. Then as here the use of a "narcotic" drug was one among the many personal and social vices of the target group—Mexicans were lazy, dirty, promiscuous, violent, subintelligent, criminal, anarchistic, communist, and intoxicated with marijuana.

This last one was important only insofar as it was part of the overall hostile stereotype of the Mexicans, and it reflected—at the same time as it was designed to justify—the drawing of the lines of economic conflict at the time. Where there was class conflict, as in the agricultural counties, the marijuana issue was relatively marginal, although still more salient after 1930 than before. The farm interests focused primarily on the anarchistic-communistic elements of the

TABLE 7

AVERAGE ANNUAL NUMBER OF ARRESTS AND ARREST RATES, NONFEDERAL NARCOTIC VIOLATORS, 1934-41

| Race | Annual Average Gross Total | Rate per 100,000 People (Based on 1930 Census). |
|---|---|---|
| Black | 413.8 | 3.5 |
| Mexican | 282.9 | 19.9 |
| Chinese | 525.5 | 514.4 |
| White | 1548.9 | 1.4 |

*Source:* Helmer (1973a:139).

stereotype, but they did not need even these arguments to mobilize the police and the other agencies of state power for their own defense.

In Los Angeles, like several of the northern cities, the lines of conflict were drawn essentially along ethnic lines *within* the working class—between Mexicans and Italians, or Poles (Chicago), or Irish or Greeks (New York, Detroit, etc.). This was a struggle for a diminishing number of jobs in the unskilled sector at declining wage standards. Although some of the older established ethnic groups were strongly represented in the police and even on the magistrates bench, and could implement a rough version of their feelings toward the Mexicans, for this to become public policy required a broader mobilization of community groups. What was needed was a basis for a broad coalition of anti-Mexican forces, and the racial stereotype, along with the ideology of marijuana, provided exactly that. Just how localized this issue was can be gauged from Table 7, which indicates the average annual arrests (totals and rates) for all narcotic drug offenses (including marijuana) made by local police around the country between 1934 and 1941.

In light of the widespread publicity given to the Mexicans, and of the intense public concern for the dangers of marijuana at the time, it is surprising to find that the average number of Mexicans arrested annually on drug charges was smaller than the number of any one of the other races. In simple numerical terms, the major drug problem was a white one, but the Federal Bureau of Narcotics treated this as residual and inoffensive (Helmer 1974). If racial concentration of drug use gave this problem its popular visibility, then it was not the Mexicans on whom attention should have been fixed, but the Chinese instead. Their offense rate was higher than the highest rate of addiction ever estimated for the country as a whole, and yet nationally it was almost completely ignored at the time. Among the Chinese, there was no labor surplus or labor conflict problem comparable to the Mexican, and this was the crux of the matter.

# 5 WORKING-CLASS HEROIN USE 1950-1970

From Figure 1 we observed that black drug offenders remained a numerical minority, at least through the 1930s, although from 1920 on there was a significant increase in their relative likelihood (compared with whites) of becoming offenders. Table 8 reports the FBI statistics from 1933 to 1955, which indicate that beginning in 1950 blacks were in the majority and they remained this way until 1960. At that point there is evidence of both an absolute and relative increase in white drug use (primarily heroin). Computing the index of susceptibility for black drug offenders (in relation to whites) for the three census years 1950, 1960 and 1970, we find that it fell from 9.7 in the earlier year, to 7.4, and then down to 2.1 in the most recent one. This means that blacks continue today to be more likely to be arrested for drug offenses than whites but that the margin between them is diminishing (Helmer 1974).

The development is an important one to record, for we have become accustomed to thinking of heroin use as primarily an inner-city black problem (Wald et al. 1972), when in fact this has been a rather short-lived (1950-60) feature of the more stable class phenomenon—as short-lived, for example, as the Jewish heroin problem (1910-20).

In Chein's study of adolescent drug offenders in New York City between 1969 and 1953, correlations run for drug rates and class, but adding in the race variable (black or not) improved the variance explained by only 7% for Manhattan and not at all for Brooklyn and the Bronx. On the other hand, adding in the ethnic variable (Puerto Rican) made no difference in the Manhattan relationship, and 13% and 15% for the other boroughs respectively (Chein 1964:73).

Data on the most recent (current) "epidemic" of heroin use confirm the strength of the class correlation, as well as the impact of continued heroin use among Puerto Ricans (New York) (Chambers 1971). A new group of white

TABLE 8

PERSONS CHARGED WITH VIOLATION OF NONFEDERAL NARCOTIC LAWS BY RACE

| Period | White | Black | B/W Ratio | Mexican | Chinese |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1933 | 2,251 | 362 | .16 | n.a. | n.a. |
| 1934 | 2,327 | 511 | .22 | 323 | 621 |
| 1935 | 2,178 | 496 | .23 | 307 | 581 |
| 1936 | 520 | 148 | .28 | 281 | 698 |
| 1937 | 657 | 202 | .31 | 303 | 609 |
| 1938 | 880 | 190 | .22 | 291 | 444 |
| 1939 | 1,171 | 252 | .22 | 263 | 457 |
| 1940 | 3,118 | 968 | .31 | 300 | 527 |
| 1941 | 1,540 | 543 | .35 | 195 | 267 |
| 1942 | 694 | 244 | .35 | n.a. | 165 |
| 1943 | 806 | 347 | .43 | n.a. | 167 |
| 1944 | 1,009 | 517 | .51 | n.a. | 186 |
| 1945 | 1,205 | 567 | .47 | n.a. | 130 |
| 1946 | 1,773 | 903 | .51 | n.a. | 96 |
| 1947 | 2,167 | 1,120 | .52 | n.a. | 62 |
| 1948 | 2,876 | 1,776 | .62 | n.a. | 107 |
| 1949 | 3,620 | 2,677 | .74 | n.a. | 135 |
| 1950 | 3,969 | 4,262 | 1.08 | n.a. | 175 |
| 1951 | 5,873 | 6,697 | 1.14 | n.a. | 227 |
| 1952* | 1,635 | 1,447 | .89 | n.a. | 7 |
| 1953† | 2,563 | 3,018 | 1.12 | n.a. | 27 |
| 1954†† | 2,371 | 4,154 | 1.75 | n.a. | 25 |
| 1955 | 2,462 | 4,363 | 1.77 | n.a. | 22 |

* Arrests for 232 cities over 25,000 in population. Prior to this no estimate given of the number of agencies forwarding fingerprint records.

† Arrests for 1,174 cities over 2,500 in population.

†† Arrests for 1,389 cities over 2,500 in population.

*Source: Uniform Crime Reports.*

heroin users began to develop after 1969; these were working-class veterans of military service, more particularly, of the Vietnam war. Estimates of their number are quite imprecise and vary from 4% to 33% of all heroin users (Helmer 1974).

We should add that without doubt heroin has been used in the middle-class suburbs of the country, but only one case of an "epidemic" in such places has

been verified; there, in Grosse Pointe, Michigan, the numbers involved, while perhaps large in the local context, were insignificant in the state aggregate or by comparison with the number of drug users estimated for a big city like Detroit (Levengood et al. 1971; Kroll et al. 1971). But this is the point: in the *aggregate* of narcotic offenders, users or addicts, and nothwithstanding popular notions about its makeup, the suburban or middle-class group is a tiny minority of the cases.

In the one available survey of New York State for drug use taken in 1970, not a single upper- or upper-middle-class heroin user could be found. The class measurement was made on a neighborhood basis, and according to the author, the random selection methodology used favored discovery of the stable and higher-class users. Still, the proportion of middle-class heroin users (15%) was less than half their distribution in the general sample population, and the lower-middle or lower-class users (84.4%) were significantly more numerous than the normal distribution (Chambers 1971:132).

This does not mean that the higher classes did not use drugs; they did, but the ones they used were legal in most cases or were used in circumstances which were legal. Drugs used disproportionately by the upper-middle class included legal narcotics (pain-killers like Demerol, Dilaudid, Dolophine), hallucinogens (peyote, psylocybin), marijuana and diet pills. The middle-class drug users disproportionately preferred LSD, the pain-killers, relaxants and tranquilizers (Chambers 1971).

There is other evidence to suggest that although middle-class drug users are less likely to be known to the police, those who are not known reflect pretty much the conventional drug preference of their class (Nurco et al. 1971). In other words, there are almost no hidden middle-class narcotics users.

Once we accept that narcotics use was and remains a feature of the conditions of working-class life, the demography of the urban working class between 1920 and 1950 can help to explain why the offender-addict population was blacker in 1950 than in 1920, and why this seemed to have happened so suddenly between 1949 and 1953. In another paper this is discussed in detail (Helmer 1974).

# 6 | SUMMARY

*Differential Urban In-Migration Rates*

The First World War and then immigration restrictions instituted afterward cut off the flow of European immigrants into the United States. Between 1920 and 1930 the numbers of Russian-born people had fallen 16%, Irish by 11%; Germans and Czechs also registered slight declines. Blacks continued to move north as they had done throughout the war. New York and Illinois (New York City and Chicago) received the largest numbers (Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia lost the greatest number), and in proportion to the total population. Blacks doubled in both. By 1950 9.8% of New York City's population was black (1920, 2.9%); in Chicago 14.1% was black (1920, 4.2%).

*Differential Job Allocation Patterns*

The jobs the newly arriving blacks took were the ones the European immigrants had traditionally taken. By any criterion they were the worst jobs. In the slaughter houses and meat-packing plants in Chicago, for example, this was the picture in 1909. Foreign-born white workers outnumbered the native-born whites and blacks by nearly four to one; blacks were only 3%. The largest ethnic group was Polish (28%) and after them came Lithuanians (12%), Germans and Czechoslovaks (10%). In 1928 the situation was quite different. Blacks were now the largest group in the work force (30%) and native-born whites came after them (27%). The number of Polish-born had dropped to a third of what it had been (12%), Lithuanians were down to 8%, Germans to 3%, and Czechoslovaks to 2% (Taylor 1932:40).

Quite quickly blacks became concentrated in the jobs at the bottom of the occupational structure, and the foreign-born ethnics who had been there before them moved out. In part this reflected some very real gains which the white working class had made through union organization and agitation (cf. Rosenblum 1972)—gains, incidentally, which were taken at the expense of the black

workforce which was excluded from union membership and shut out of the wage bargains the membership could achieve. In part also it reflected broader obstacles of institutionalized racism and prejudice which stopped blacks getting the education or skill enhancement needed to justify higher wages or jobs in industries with relatively high technological development, expanding productivity and stability of employment.

*Differential Spatial Location*

Early migration effects, income differences and effective residential segregation worked together to imprison blacks in central-city neighborhoods, while the white working class was able to, and chose to, move out. It was in these neighborhoods that narcotics were to be found in this period, just as the trade in drugs had flourished when Jews and Italians (etc.) had lived there in the teens of the century. The spatial displacement paralleled occupational displacement, and both are linked to the substitution of black for white narcotics users through the 1940s and 1950s.

*Differential Birth Rates*

The birth rate among blacks arriving in the North during the 1930s remained higher than among whites, nothwithstanding a significant fall-off during the Depression. Both fell, but the black rate fell less steeply. The effect was to widen the disparity between the two birth rates. Thus in 1920 the non-white rate was 35.0 (live births per 1,000 population), just over 30% higher than the white (26.9). In 1936, however, the year when rates for both racial groups reached their lowest point in recorded history, the black rate was nearly 43% higher than the white; in 1934 the gap was even greater–45%.

Since a person born in 1934 turned sixteen in 1950, as compared with earlier years the numerical gap between blacks and whites reached a high point from 1949 to 1951, and there were bound to be relatively more blacks aged sixteen than whites of the same age. This is the age at which regular heroin use typically starts.

*Differential Labor Market Experience*

Since the age of onset of narcotics use corresponds with age of initial entry into the labor force–this has evidently been true going back as far as 1910 (Bloedorn 1917)–and since our orienting hypothesis predicted that periods of severe labor surplus would be periods of increased narcotics use, we have examined labor market conditions for the 16-to-19-year-old age group, by race,

for the two peak periods of narcotics use in the last two decades, 1949-53 and 1969-73.

The first point to observe is that special discriminating forces operate in the labor market against teenagers, although only recently have economists been able to identify these forces as pure discrimination in the sense that labor market outcomes for teenagers (wage rates, for example) are unresponsive to parity, difference or just simply change in the economic characteristics of teenage labor *vis-à-vis* adult labor (Kalachek 1969; Bureau of Labor Statistics 1970).

The second point is that the demographic factors already cited, in particular the differential birth rates, produced an unusual situation around 1950 when the teenage share of the general population fell (by 25%) and at the same time the black share of the total teenage population increased (by 9%). What resulted was complex: there was a significant increase (14%) in the overall numbers of teenagers entering the labor market, but this increase was entirely absorbed by whites. Black labor force participation actually fell during the decade and, among males, continued to fall through 1970. This is the first sign that a deteriorating labor market was directly connected to the narcotics epidemics of the period. There are several others.

The fall in labor force participation among black teenagers might have led to more people staying in school, only this is not what happened.

Table 9 indicates that since 1940 white teenagers overall have increasingly taken advantage of longer periods of schooling, and consequently the ratio of school non-attenders to attenders has shown a consistent decline. Between 1940 and 1950, however, black teenagers, blocked from entering the job market, did not stay in school, and in part the relative number of dropouts has increased. Unemployment rates reached a peak between 1949 and 1950, and again between 1971 and 1972, and the relative severity of unemployment for blacks grew at the same time, as measured by the ratio of black to white rates. Other evidence indicates that among black teenagers, even supposing they could find jobs, a longer period of schooling, including high school graduation and even under-

TABLE 9

RATIO OF SCHOOL NON-ATTENDERS TO ATTENDERS,
MALE 14-19 YEAR OLDS BY RACE,
NEW YORK 1940-60

| Race | 1940 | 1950 | 1960 |
|---|---|---|---|
| Black | 0.41 | 0.47 | 0.47 |
| White | 0.45 | 0.38 | 0.27 |

*Source:* Computed from Census figures.

graduate training, would not significantly alter their long-term income prospects (Davis-1972), nor in the short-term their particular occupational chances and (in the aggregate) their occupational distribution (Stevenson 1972; Strauss 1972).

One of the inadequacies of the data we have used is that the racial groups were not disaggregated by class indices so that at this stage our discussion must be limited to black-white differences as they relate to narcotics use, and not whatever differences or similarities may exist between blacks and working-class whites. To the extent that, as indicated before, the rate of recruitment of the latter to narcotics use has been much faster than that of the former since 1960, it is reasonable to suppose that these economic conditions have become increasingly similar for both groups.

For terminological convenience we speak of these conditions together as labor market dualism. From a series of recent studies we are beginning to understand more about how elements of the labor force are channeled into distinct compartments of industrial work, across which mobility is severely restricted by technological and social barriers (for a summary and review of research, see Gordon, Reich and Edwards 1973). Only one of these compartments conforms to prevailing popular conceptions of what is "normal," or to the normative assumptions made by sociologists seeking to measure deviance among those groups locked into the bottom compartment.

*The primary labor market.* The upper compartment contains those workers who achieve family living standards of minimum decent poverty or better. This compartment functions with skill and effort rewarded by higher wages, with jobs having reasonably high stability and employees having a reasonably low turnover rate, and with technological levels, management efficiency, and labor productivity steadily advancing. While the primary labor market is by no means immune from crisis, as witnessed by the middle-class employment calamities that have recently befallen such aerospace centers as Long Island or Seattle, crisis is the exception, and sailing along on an even keel is the rule. Employers and employees on the whole have a mutaul stake in cooperating to increase stability which reduces the costs of job search for the employee and training for the employer; they also have a mutual interest in increasing productivity which is the basis of both better wages and profits. While for contrast this picture is overdrawn on the side of harmony, there is no question that the primary labor market achieves at least one important social end. It provides its workers with earned incomes that are adequate to finance socially sanctioned living levels, and under modern conditions of national economic management and unemployment compensation it does so with no more than tolerable dislocations over the working life of the average individual. Most persons who are in the primary labor market are firmly convinced that this is the way the labor market as a whole operates. Yet this is not so.

*The secondary labor market.* In the lower compartment, low wage levels, technological backwardness, and low skills form a vicious circle. Technology and management methods are either archaic by prevailing standards, as in the case of subcontracting firms on the fringes of an established industry, or a sector as a whole stagnates, such as garment manufacturing or retail and personal services. Even otherwise advanced and well-managed firms may harbor a corner of backwardness and stagnation, for example in the area of janitorial services. The stagnant firms or activities are under-capitalized, have low productivity, and pay substandard wages. Wage levels average at least one-third below family living incomes, making it impossible for workers in the secondary labor market to aspire to stable, settled patterns of family living.

This market is, moreover, locked in a state of permanent crisis. Marginal firms are fighting for survival and have neither the resources nor the will to upgrade their technology, management methods, or wage levels. While the skills and productivity of the secondary labor force are low, they are all that the backward production methods can effectively utilize; higher education and skills are neither desired nor rewarded in this market. Nor is labor stability prized; the low technologies require next to no labor training and therefore the employer has no stake at all in holding on to his workers. On the contrary, he prefers a high turnover since this reduces the chance of wage demands or union organization. And ironically, the motivations of the workers are such as to reinforce these conditions. They live a floating existence of crisis, and they lack any drive to improve their skills, productivity or employment stability. "Turnover" amounts to several job changes per year interspersed with periods of unemployment. Adaptability to training is minimal, not surprisingly since officially sponsored training programs are near-total failures in opening the doors to the primary labor market. They are seen as simply another dead-end temporary job (Vietorisz and Harrison 1972).

This briefly describes the institutional structures of labor market opportunity to which teenage recruits must adapt. One of the adaptations is recruitment to crime as an alternative income source when labor mobility is blocked and when either the real return on labor in the secondary market declines (e.g., in periods of rapid inflation) or unemployment in that sector rises—or both. In this light we identify recruitment to narcotics use as recruitment to the narcotics trade and industry, and as economically rational in these circumstances. Although a research project is underway to test a series of hypotheses related to this central theoretical idea, the data in the historical record are worthy of publication. They are persuasive, perhaps, but still far from decisive.

# 7 | CONCLUSION

In earlier sections we argued that public concern about narcotics use and the intensity and focus of law enforcement were functions of the condition of the labor market. We should qualify that now by saying that it has never been the overall market which counted but the secondary one. In other words, in times of scarcity when unskilled labor was hard to come by, popular anxiety about, and police arrests of drug users who came from this segment, used to fall to a minimum.

But times of surplus, such as the late 1870s in California, the early and late teens of this century in New York, the thirties, the early fifties and the seventies across the country, have been times of industrial unrest, working-class agitation and militancy, and sharpened political conflict. To these manifestations increased law enforcement has been the typical response of the State—which of course covers every public authority from municipal police to Federal agents. Repression is the simple word for it.

Of course, public officials with this purpose do not announce it as such, like a gang of blackshirts. Instead, drug enforcement is one of the ways a basically repressive policy directed at an entire class, or at least the section of it confined to the secondary labor market, has been carried out—by all appearances legally and under the pretext of meeting a new and vicious threat. While it has given legitimacy to anti-working class politics, it has provided at the same time a method for pitting the class against itself by identifying ethnic or racial minorities as scapegoats for larger and more fundamental social ills. Social scientists have played their part in this by reinforcing the scapegoat identification in the context of so-called scientific research (Helmer 1973, Ch. 4).

Today race and racism are central features of the way in which the labor market operates: to the extent that blackness condemns a person to working out his life in the secondary labor force and bars almost all occupational mobility (upward), then we can say it also determines the particular black susceptibility to drug use that in earlier sections has been identified. Race, however, appears from the evidence to be only a special case of the broader working-class pattern, and the labor market forces which are associated with it.

We have devoted the bulk of this paper to a historical survey because these data are so poorly known, and without them the context of the study of narcotics use is quite artificial. We are frankly tired of reading social psychological or psychological studies of heroin users which identify as independent variables family structure, adolescent peer association, parental deprivation, socialization and value internalization patterns which are characteristic of working-class culture in general (as well as its particular racial or ethnic offshoots) and which are themselves dependent upon the economic exigencies of working-class life, the market for working-class labor, and which do not deserve to be treated as independent causal variables in their own right (cf. Rodman 1971). The psychological and psychiatric literature is particularly unfortunate in this regard, and since class controls are almost never employed in this research, what is frequently presented as a theory of addiction will generally fit working-class behavior in general (Helmer 1974).

Once we realize that not only is the socioeconomic pattern of narcotics use the same as it was a century ago, but that the problem of widespread addiction is a recurrent and cyclical one, we are forced to examine the social constants which have operated in each case or episode in the cycle. This report is intended as a first statement of what these are and how they work.

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